

**Abstract 713**

**TITLE:** Connecting Agencies Through a Low -Cost, Easily-Implemented Collaborative HIV/STD Internet Site

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**ISSUE:** The Internet can be an effective tool for disseminating HIV/STD public information, building capacity among HIV/STD organizations, and connecting agencies, cities, and states. The Internet is available 24 hours a day, accessible in remote areas, and offers information with anonymity. However, many HIV/STD agencies have neither the money nor the expertise to utilize the Internet.

**SETTING:** HIV/STD prevention and treatment agencies.

**PROJECT:** Facing the same limitations of funds & expertise, the Denver Department of Public Health (DPH) initiated AIDScentral.com, a website focusing on HIV in Colorado. Rather than have the site be simply an extension of one agency or coalition (as is typically the case), the site was begun as a collaborative effort between local agencies. The site provides HIV information for the general public while at the same time targeting service providers around the state with several objectives. (1) Keeping HIV/STD service providers aware of current issues, upcoming events, and skills -building trainings around the state. (2) Offering a comprehensive, up -to-date listing of statewide HIV/STD service providers for referral and collaboration. (3) Providing printable public information materials on a number of topics, including epidemiological slides and graphs, for use by agencies. (4) Providing a twice-weekly e-mail newsletter with current events, trainings, and resources to providers statewide.

**RESULTS:** In 1998, AIDS Central had over sixty thousand visitors. The e -mail newsletter (AIDS Central NEWS) is sent regularly to 150 providers around Colorado. AIDS Central has offered an immediacy not found in other media types and has allowed providers across the state to be updated when new HIV/STD programs begin, when agencies change locations, when other providers are seeing emerging trends or when various topical issues arise. The nature of the site is such that it could easily be replicated in other arenas and regions. The website was built and maintained in 1998 for under \$300.

**LESSONS LEARNED:** Utilization and feedback both suggest that a need exists for the services that the Website provides. Experience also suggests that the collaborative nature of the site is integral to its success. The low cost indicates that even small programs can implement such a site. Additionally, this program could be replicated by computer users with no computer programming expertise.

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